

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor



Daphne Griffin
Executive Director

Dear Boston Resident:

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about our proposed consolidations this coming fiscal year. Our top priority at Boston Centers for Youth & Families (BCYF) is keeping high-quality services available to all neighborhoods in the City of Boston. As you may know, BCYF consolidated eight of our 46 community center facilities last year through the FY11 budget process. All eight sites remain open, with vibrant programs providing important services to the neighborhoods in which they are housed.

We are beginning to see improvements throughout our network of sites which is why we are proposing further consolidations in FY12. We are working toward achieving the ideal community center at every BCYF location, but we are not there yet.

In our proposed FY12 budget, there are five community center facilities slated for consolidation: the Harborside Community Center at the Umana Middle School Academy in East Boston; the Kent Community Center in Charlestown; the Mason Pool; the Orchard Gardens Community Center in Roxbury and the Tynan Community Center in South Boston. Our criteria for selecting these sites included performance/usage data, geography and the location of nearby agencies, partnerships, hours of operation, programming, neighborhood demographics, and other qualitative factors.

What does this mean for users of the centers? We are hoping for a smooth transition that most participants won't even notice. Summer programs/camps and summer employment opportunities for our youth will continue through this summer at many of these locations –except in the case of the Harborside Community Center (located in the Umana Middle School Academy) which BPS must close for renovation. Paris Street Community Center will host the Harborside's programs.

Currently, we are reaching out to user groups at these centers offering them the opportunity to continue to use the facilities. The young people who participate in center-run programs such as the afterschool programs will have the opportunity to partake in these activities at a nearby BCYF community center or perhaps continue in a program at the center run by a partner organization that could offer similar services moving forward.

The main goal of the consolidations is to improve the quality of our programs and services by enhancing our staffing levels at our remaining sites. These decisions have not been easy, but they have been necessary for a system that is spread too thin and they have been made with the best interest of the children, youth and families of Boston at heart.

While we recognize the history of these centers and the important role they have played in the community, this issue has never been about a building but about preserving our programs for the benefit of all. Please see some common questions and responses below and feel free to contact bcyf@cityofboston.gov if you have any further questions or concerns.

Is my center closing if a lead partner is not found to take over center operation?

Loss of programs or facility closure is not an option. We are diligently working to identify lead partners for each facility. Any summer programming at these facilities will continue in these locations except in the case of the Harborside Community Center (located in the Umana Middle School Academy) which BPS must close for renovation. Paris Street Community Center will host the Harborside's programs. In addition to engaging existing and new partners to oversee programming at sites, BCYF will also move and/or merge programs from consolidated sites to nearby BCYF locations. For example, we will work with BPS to assist parents with requesting alternative transportation to arrive by school bus at the other nearby BCYF site.

We are confident that there will be little or no disruptions at any of the impacted sites. All impacted sites are in neighborhoods with other BCYF community centers in close proximity.

What is going to happen to the staff at these centers?

Most staff are being redeployed to other nearby BCYF community centers. In most cases, the staff will continue to work in the same neighborhood they work in now.

What will happen to the activities such as basketball league or the community and other meetings that outside agencies host at the centers?

Those will continue. We are speaking with current user groups at the five impacted sites to find out if they are interested in continuing to use the space and we will work with them to make the transition. In the case of a center located in a school building, BPS allows community groups to use their facilities regardless of whether there is a BCYF center located there so we will work with all parties involved so the activities and meetings can continue.